

FROM THE COUNCIL TO GOD

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FROM THE COUNCIL TO GOD

*A Letter to the Members of the
Œcumenical Council*

I

THE COUNCIL THEN AND NOW

ONE thousand five hundred and forty-four years ago, the first Œcumenical Council of believers in the religion of Jesus met together at Nice. You are now met together in a new Council—your last—in Rome. The first Council was the solemn and venerable consecration of the triumph and organised unity of the religion needed by the age. The present Council—whatever you intend by it—will proclaim the great fact of the death of a religion, and, therefore, of the inevitable and not distant advent of another.

Thirty-seven years ago I wrote certain pages entitled, *From the Pope to the Council*. In those pages—misunderstood, as usual, by superficial

readers—I declared the Papacy to be morally extinct, and invoked the meeting of a Religious Council to declare that fact to the peoples. But the Council I desired was not yours. It was a Council convoked by a free people, united in worship of duty and of the ideal; to be composed of the worthiest in intellect and virtue among the believers in things eternal, in the mission of God's creature upon this earth, and in the worship of progressive truth; who should meet together for the purpose of religiously interrogating the pulsations of the heart of Collective Humanity, and to demand of that prophetic but uncertain instinct of the future which exists in the peoples: *What portions of the old faith are dead within you? What portions of the new faith are awakening into life within you?*

At a later period (in 1847), when the same Pope who now bids you declare him Infallible was hesitating between the suggestions of vanity flattered by popular applause and the inherent tendencies of despotic power; when all the Italians, both learned and unlearned, frantically endeavoured to make of him their leader in their struggle for nationality and liberty; I alone—in a letter also misunderstood—frankly declared to him the truth: *that a new faith was destined to take the place of the old: that the new faith would not accept any privileged Interpreter between the people and God: and*

that, if he desired to avail himself of the enthusiasm by which he was surrounded, and become himself the initiator of the new epoch and the new faith, he must descend from the Papal throne, and go forth among the people an apostle of truth, like Peter the Hermit preaching the Crusades. I quote myself, reluctantly, that you may know that, in thus addressing you, I am neither moved by the hasty impulse of a rebellious soul, nor by foolish anger at the Pope's withholding Rome from my country. We shall have Rome—even before your fate is sealed—so soon as the republican banner is again raised in Italy. It is from a profound conviction, matured by long and earnest meditation, and confirmed by the study and experience of more than a third of a century, that, in the face of a Pope who, by his syllabus, has thrown his gauntlet of defiance to the idea of the progressive mission of humanity in the face of a Council composed of the members of one Church only, without the intervention of any possible representatives of the dawning Church of the future, I declare to you :

That your faith is irrevocably doomed to perish : that, whether as promoters of a new schism, if you separate on the question of the Pope's pretensions, or as suicidal destroyers of the primitive conception of your Church, if you submerge it in the arbitrary will of an individual, you are and will be

inevitably cut off from, and excommunicated by humanity; and that we, who are believers more than you, and more than you solicitous of a religious future of the world, reject beforehand your decrees, and appeal from your Council to God; to God the Father and Educator of man; to the God of life, not of things dead; to the God of all men, not of a caste.

The three hundred and twenty bishops who met together at Nice did lawfully represent the multitude of believers: they were the issue of a democratic inspiration, which is the soul of every rising faith: they were the elect of the clergy and the people.

You are but a pitiful aristocracy, created and consecrated by power; and, like the elements of all falling institutions, without root in the heart of the Church, the people of believers. You represent nothing but a hierarchy, the reflex of the thought of others, in which every spontaneous thought is regarded as rebellion.

The majority of the first Council bore upon their brows the signs of sacred sorrow felt for the numberless races of slaves disinherited of every human right, and the traces of persecutions undergone for the sake of the faith that promised them emancipation; the greater number of them were poor.

You make display of luxury and wealth—there is

no sign upon your brows of the sorrows that purify and refine ; nor pallor, save that of constant *inertia* and idle ease of indifference to the miseries of millions of brothers given to you by God, and to the vital questions by which our hearts are tormented.

In the face of the brute force of the corrupt and tottering empire, whose frontiers echoed to the threatening footsteps of the barbarians, those bishops raised the banner of a moral idea, of a spiritual power, destined to save civilisation, and win over the barbarians to its rule.

You worship Force ; force which, from Prometheus to Galileo, has ever sought to enchain the revealers and precursors of the future to the motionless rock of present fact. Before this force do you bow down and preach to the peoples blind submission, even when it violates the moral law ; as you invoke its aid, whether proffered by infidels to your faith or not, whensoever you are threatened in your usurped temporal power.

The believers of Nice initiated an era, and blessed the peoples congregated at its threshold. You are struggling to recommence a worn-out and exhausted past, and you curse the generation which will not, cannot, follow you in your labour of Sisyphus.

II

THE MIASMA OF MATERIALISM

I AM no materialist. Young men of narrow intellect and superficial education, but warm-hearted and irritated to excess against a dead past which still would dominate the present; whose vanity is flattered by an idea of intellectual daring; who lack capacity to discover in that which has been, the law of that which shall be, are led to confound the negation of a worn-out form of religion, with denial of that eternal religion which is innate in the human soul; and in them materialism assumes the aspect of a generous rebellion, and is often accompanied by power of sacrifice and sincere reverence for liberty. But when diffused among the peoples, materialism slowly but infallibly extinguishes the fire of high and noble thought, as well as every spark of free life, through the exclusive worship of material well-being, and finally prostrates them before successful violence, before the despotism of the *fait accompli*. Materialism extinguished every spark of Italian life amongst us three

centuries ago ; as, eighteen centuries earlier, it had extinguished all republican virtue in Rome ; as it would—should it again be infused among our multitudes--extinguish every germ of future greatness in our new-born Italy.

Morally, materialism is disinherited of all criterion of right, or principle of *collective* education. Between the idea of an intelligent, pre-ordained law, which assigns to human life an *aim*, and the idea of a blind, unreasoning, fatal force of *facts*, or transitory phenomena, there is no middle path ; and materialists, by ignoring the first, are necessarily driven to the worship of the second, and prostrate themselves, sooner or later, before the despotism (whether its *method* be Bonapartist bayonets or republican guillotines is of little matter) of force. Admitting neither a providential conception regulating the existence of collective humanity, nor the immortality of the individual *Ego*, they may, illogically, utter the holy words *progress* and *duty* ; but they have deprived the first of its basis, and the second of its source. The senseless, brutal doctrine cancels from men's minds the only real virtue, sacrifice ; for, although individual followers of that doctrine may be urged by a religious instinct within them to *fulfil* it, they cannot teach it. What avails martyrdom for a holy idea, when all pledge of future benefit to the race, or even to the individual

himself, is destroyed? Amid the darkness of a world deprived of all ideal; in a brief, tormented existence, ungoverned by any law save sensation and the appetites to which it gives rise, the answer of mankind to every moral lesson will be, *Egotism*. Such has, in fact, been their answer in all those periods when a common faith has passed away, and given place to the anarchy of cold and sterile negations: *panem et circenses: each for himself: Interest, lord of all*.

Scientifically, interest is based upon a periodical confusion in men's minds of the instruments of life with life itself; of the manifestations of the *Ego*, with the *Ego* itself; of the consequences and applications of thought, with the thinking being itself; of the secondary forces revealed in the operation of the organism, with the initial force which excites, moderates, examines, and compares those operations; of the limited, transitory, relative, and contingent phenomena which alone are accessible to the organism, with the life which links them all to that absolute and eternal truth which alone gives value and significance to those phenomena; of the application of the human faculties to the eternal world, with the faculties themselves; of effects, with causes; of the real, with the ideal; of facts, with the law by which they are governed.

That *Ego* which reflects upon the phenomena of

the organism, is not that organism ; that life which forms the harmony and unity of the whole, which consciously and mindfully directs the special functions towards a given aim, is not those functions themselves ; the being which ponders of the future, of providence, of God, of immortality, of the infinite, of choice between good and evil ; which resists the impulse of the senses and denies their sway—now in Athens and now on Golgotha ; now in the prison of Petroni * and now on the national battle-field, in sacrifice of self—is not those senses themselves.

The *experimentalism* of those children lispng science who call themselves materialists, is but one fragment of science ; it simply verifies, through as many facts as it can muster, the discoveries of intuition ; those sudden, spontaneous discoveries made by the rapid, intense concentration of all the faculties upon a given point. And the facts themselves which, being embraced and explained by hypothesis and discovery, demonstrate truth, require, in order to be usefully observed, interpreted and classified, the guidance of a *principle*, a pre-accepted conception of law. Synthesis, the innate

*Petroni, a distinguished lawyer of Bologna, had languished in the Papal dungeons since 1853. He was offered a means of escape, but as his fellow prisoners were not included he decided to remain with them.

supreme faculty of the human soul, illumines the path of analysis from on high ; without its aid analysis could but stumble uncertainly and impotently along a labyrinth of facts, of aspect and bearing constantly differing according to their relation to other facts.

There is a harmony between the order of things and the human mind, pre-existent to all experiment, which does but ascertain and define that harmony. Equally inaccessible to experiment are man's consciousness of himself, the mode of transmission between the inert, inorganic matter and the living and thinking matter ; the universal, perennial, and dominating intuition which exists in a limited and imperfect world, ruled (according to the materialist theory) by chance, or the blind unconscious sequence of facts, of an ideal, a conception of indefinite perfectibility ; the power of free activity which exists in man ; the undeniable existence within us of a something which is not enchained in any special organ, but passes from one to another, examining, deciding upon, and connecting their operations ; and the hourly visible influence of moral force, of *will* upon the material world.

Experiment may give us the accidents, not the essence of things ; to reach that essence, science must maintain its connecting link with religion. Without a theory or *method*, all real, true, and

fruitful science is impossible. The *method* is furnished by our conception of the *aim* of life; the aim once ascertained, affirms the relation between man and humanity, between humanity and the universe, the universe and God—law and life. Now the *aim*, which is the discovery and progressive realisation of the design according to which the universe is evidently organised, and of which material laws are the means, can only be found through a philosophical religious conception.

Science reveals and masters the material and intellectual forces given to man wherewith to realise the aim; but the aim itself is determined by the religious synthesis of the period; and the religious synthesis is the sanction of the duty of each man to avail himself of those forces in furtherance of the aim, according to his faculties. To break this union is to render science sterile. Humanity pursues a different course, and when the history of science shall be rightly written, it will demonstrate that to every great religion is attached a corresponding epoch of fruitful scientific progress; and that, although during the periods of transition between the fall of one religion and the rise of another, Science may discover phenomena and collect facts which offer materials for the new synthesis, she will misconceive alike their value and their law, as is the case at the present day.

Historically, materialism is inexorably, invariably representative and characteristic of a period of transition between one religious faith and another, when all unity of conception and of aim being lost, and lost every sense of a common doctrine and true philosophic method, human intellect invariably falls back upon the mere anatomy of facts, refuses the guidance of synthesis, and is left with one criterion of truth only—the *Ego* disjoined from Collective Humanity and God—negation and anarchy. It is but a funeral lamp that dimly illumines a bier, and is only extinguished when, inspired by the breath of the future, the bier is transformed into the cradle of the new faith, not ascertained, but invoked by the majority, and forefelt to be inevitable and near. This moment is approaching more rapidly than is generally believed, in spite of all that you men of the past, and true prolongers of the disastrous period of transition, can do to prevent it.

Meanwhile materialism denies humanity, in which the religious sense, like the artistic and philosophical, is an alienable element of life: it denies tradition—the harmony of which, with the voice of individual inspiration and conscience, is the sole criterion of truth we possess on earth: it denies history, which teaches us that religions are transitory, but Religion is eternal: it denies the solemn witness borne in adoration of God and the

Ideal, by the long series of our greatest minds, from Socrates to Humboldt, from Phidias to Michael-Angelo, from Æschylus to Byron: it denies the power of revelation innate in man, in order to date the discovery of truth from the meagre labours upon a fragment of creation studied by one single faculty of the mind of a Moleshott, Buchner, or other.

Not for you do I write this—you are nearly all of you practical materialists—but for my young fellow-countrymen, good, but misled; and, because I hold that no man who assumes to speak of the future of our rising Italy has henceforth a right to keep silence as to his own religious belief, or to abstain from uttering his protest against the irruptions of the Barbarians of thought who rave amid the ruins of an epoch.

I am not ungrateful to that epoch, nor irreverent to those grand ruins. I am not forgetful of the gigantic step taken by humanity towards its destined aim, through the religious faith in the name of which you are met together. Neither have I forgotten that we owe to it, not only the idea of the unity of the human family, and of the equality and emancipation of souls, but also the salvation of the relics of our anterior Latin civilisation, and the recall of my fast-expiring country to the life half-extinguished by her barbarian invaders, by

awakening her to the consciousness of her second mission in the world.

The salvation of Christianity, and through it of European civilisation, through the unity of your hierarchy during a period of darkness and anarchy—the spirit of love towards the poor and afflicted outcasts of society, which inspired your early bishops and popes—the severe struggle sustained by them in the name of the Moral law against the arbitrary power and ferocity of feudal lords and conquering kings—the great mission (misunderstood in our day by those who know nothing or comprehend nothing of history) fulfilled by that giant of intellect and will, Gregory VII., and the fruitful victory won by him in aid of the rule of mind over royal arms, of the Italian over the German element—the mission of civilising conquest you fulfilled among semi-barbarous peoples, the impulse given to agriculture by your monks during the first three centuries, the preservation of the language of our fathers, the splendid epoch of art inspired by faith in your dogma, the learned works of your Benedictines, the commencement of gratuitous education, the foundation of institutions of benevolence, your sisters of mercy,—I remember all these things, and bow down in reverence before the image of your past.

But wherefore do you, in a world wherein all things, by God's decree, die and are transformed;

seek to live for ever? Why pretend that a past, which has been extinguished for ever beneath five hundred years of inertia and impotence, should live again in the future? How is it that, in the face of three centuries of dismemberment into an infinitude of Protestant sects, and of a century of philosophical incredulity; amid the re-appearance of all those signs and warnings which characterised the intermediate period between the fall of Paganism and the rise of the Christian era, you see not that your mission is concluded; that the world is urged onward in search of a new heaven and a new earth? Wherefore, in the face of the grand tradition of humanity, throughout the course of which God reveals to us the Law of life he gave to all, which teaches you through its succession of religions the gradual continuous revelation of a Truth of which each historic epoch acquires a fragment, and none the whole, do you persist in believing, or asserting—you, whose religion had its beginning; and who represent but one epoch among many—that you hold that entire truth within your grasp? How dare you strive to violate alike the Providential design and the free conscience of mankind, by restricting, within a given narrow, the limitless ascending spiral traced by the finger of God between the universe and the Ideal it is destined slowly to attain?

III

THE LAW OF LIFE

I DO not accuse you, as do our copyists of other (French or German) copyists of the eighteenth century, of having—impostors from the earliest times—built up a religion in order to attain to power. Humanity does not tolerate a lying Fable for eighteen hundred years. If the majority amongst ourselves were believers as fervent and sincere as were the men of your faith during the first thirteen hundred years, God's new truth—of which at present we have but faintest glimpses—would already unite the multitudes in harmony of belief.

I do not accuse you of having disseminated errors, which for long years past have impeded or misled mankind upon questions which have become of vital moment at the present day. Every religion is the issue of the times, and the expression of an essentially imperfect stage in the education of the human race; but each contains a truth destined to live for ever, although overshadowed by passing error; and that amount of truth which it was

possible for the age to accept and to incarnate in action, was widely and beneficially diffused by you.

I do not accuse you—though I might with better foundation—of having been the inexorable persecutors of all who differed from you. I remember how terror was erected into a system, only sixty years back, by the advocates of liberty; and I know, moreover, that every religion founded upon the belief in an immediate, direct, and superhuman revelation, cannot fail to be intolerant.

I do not accuse you of persisting in the attempt to nail us down to a conception of God and of the relation between God and man belied by science, and against which every faculty of heart and mind granted to man for the discovery of truth, and matured by eighteen hundred years of aspiration, study, suffering, and victory, protest at the present day.

I do accuse you of maintaining a divorce between faith and science—the two wings given to the creature wherewith to elevate himself towards the divine Ideal—which must inevitably result in mental slavery or materialism.

I do accuse you of insanelly pretending that a beacon kindled eighteen hundred years ago to illumine our journey across a single epoch, is destined to be our sole luminary across the path of the infinite.

I do accuse you of destroying the unity of Collective Humanity by dividing mankind into two arbitrary sections ; one devoted to error, and the other sacred to truth ; and of blaspheming against the eternally creative and revealing power of God, by imprisoning the Word within an insignificant fraction of time and space.

I accuse you of having utterly misunderstood the holy soul of Jesus—superior to every other in aspiration and fraternal love—by transforming Him, in despite of His sublimest presentiments, into an eternal and vulgar tyrant of souls.

I accuse you of having closed your eyes in vanity and lust of power, and refused to perceive that, even as one existence succeeds another, so does one mission succeed another, and each and all are governed and sanctified by a religious synthesis.

And, above and before all, I accuse you of living no real life ; of having no other existence than that of the phantoms seen wandering among tombs to delude mortals into superstition, or degrade them by terror ; but doomed to vanish at the first blush of dawn.

Life is love. You know no longer how to love. The voice of your chief is only heard in groans of discouragement ; the formula of your declarations is an anathema.

Life is movement, aspiration, progress. You

deny progress ; shrink in terror from all aspiration ; crucify humanity upon Calvary ; reject every attempt to detach the idea from the symbol, and strive to petrify the living Word of God. You reduce all history (which is the successive manifestation of that Word) to a single moment ; you extinguish free will (without which no consciousness of progress can exist) beneath the fatalism of hereditary responsibility, and cancel all merit in works or sacrifice by the omnipotence of grace.

Life is communion : communion with nature and with man, wheresoever he loves, struggles, or hopes, and with God. You have attempted, by denying the continuity of creation, and the universal diffusion of the creative spirit, to imprison the Deity in one sole corner of the universe, and one brief period of the immensity of time. You seek even now, by the immoral antagonistic dualism you establish between earth and heaven, to banish from men's minds all reverence for nature (which is a form of the divine thought) ; and you refuse, in the name of an individual salvation to be achieved through faith and prayer, all communion with the great *collective* sorrows, the 'holy battles,' and the emancipatory hopes of mankind. Kepler, when he taught mankind how the universe opened upon the field of the infinite on every side, felt God more than you ; and Byron—whom you condemn

as a sceptic—worshipped Him more truly than you, when he sacrificed wealth, genius, and life for the cause of liberty in Greece.

Life is production : increase of that already gained ; and you have for upwards of five centuries been struggling, with ever lessening power, merely to conserve.

When a religion no longer either creates, determines or directs action ; when it rouses no power of sacrifice ; when it no longer harmonises and unites the different branches of human activity ; when its vital conception ceases to inform new symbols, or new manifestations in art, science, or civil life—that religion is expiring. You may still, by help of the deceptions of your ministers and the pomp of your rites, gather a numerous concourse of apparently devoted followers around you, and you will continue to do so, so long as their sole choice lies between the records of a faith once grand and fruitful of good, and the arid negations of a brutalising materialism ; but demand of these followers that they should die for you and for the faith you represent, and you will not find a martyr among them. You did not find one when we confronted your banner with our own in Rome, upon which was inscribed the Word of the future, *God and the People*, and proclaimed—through the unanimous vote of the very men who, the day before, declared

themselves believers in you—the abolition of your temporal power and the Republic.

Your Pope fled in disguise, and all of you vanished utterly; the constant intrigues with which you endeavoured, when at Gaeta, to raise up internal enemies amongst us, were fruitless. You were reduced to beg the aid of bayonets, the instruments of the tortuous policy and ambition of a vulgar pretender, whom you well knew to be as infamous as he was unbelieving in your doctrines. Our men died—they still die for the sake of the glimpse vouchsafed them of that new faith which, ere it has enlightened their intellects, has fired and warmed their hearts—in dungeons, or upon the scaffold or the battle-field, with a smile of defiance upon their lips; but around you I see none but mercenaries greedy of rank or gold.

Be not deceived: faith is perishing around you. Even as lingering sparks still issue from a dying fire, the expiring faith of the day finds its expression in the prayers muttered before your altars through the force of habit at stated brief moments; it evaporates at the church door, and no longer rules or guides men's daily life: they give one hour to heaven and the day to earth—to its material interests and calculations, or to studies and ideas foreign to every religious conception.

Science proceeds onward; regardless of your

doctrine, heedless of your anathema and of your councils, destroying at every step another line of the Book you declare infallible. Art wanders in the void; now retracing its steps towards the pagan ideal, now doubtfully pursuing religious aspirations other than yours; and now, as if in despair of finding any other God, reduced to worshipping itself; but always apart from the Christian synthesis, always irresponsible to the conception which inspired your architects and painters in ages past.

The iniquitous Governments of the day, to whom it is a necessity to maintain your authority in order to prop the tottering foundations of their own, deny it, none the less, in the practical exercise of their power: "the law" for them "is atheist,"--the separation of the temporal from the spiritual power is their supreme rule of guidance; and the very king who implores your benediction in secret, affects before his subjects to despise it the day after.

The men of highest power, whether of intellect or eloquence, belonging to your creed, from Lamennais down to Pere Hyacinthe, detach themselves from you one by one. Not a single one of the vast strides made upon the path of progress in our age was either suggested or consecrated by your faith.

Two nations, once sisters--the Greek and Italian--have burst asunder the walls of the tomb wherein they had lain buried for ages, and they have

neither asked nor could obtain one holy word of baptism from you.

Four millions of black slaves have been emancipated—in pledge of other emancipations—across the Atlantic, in the name of the immortal human soul within them, and they owe it to no crusade of yours, but to a war of an exclusively political character, fought by men whose sole idea was one of national unity.

Like the great German family at the downfall of paganism, and as if as a warning of the approach of a similar epoch, the Slavonian family is in movement upon a zone extending from the North Sea to the Adriatic, and eager to proffer its word at the fraternal European banquet; while you—the sometime distributors of distant lands among the monarchs—appear scarcely conscious of the fact. They ask for aid in their work, not from you but from us.

Mute, and disinherited alike of inspiration and affection, having abdicated all power of intervention in the events that transform and improve God's earth, you, who were once the world's centre, are gradually being driven back to its extremest orbit, and are destined to find yourselves at last alone in the void beyond. Motionless sphinxes in the vast desert, you inertly contemplate the shadow of the centuries as they pass. Humanity, whom you

should have guided, has gone elsewhere. Faith is perishing among the peoples, because the dogma that inspired it no longer corresponds to the stage of education which they, in fulfilment of the providential plan, have reached.

IV

OUR DOGMA—GOD AND PROGRESS

THE Christian dogma is perishing. The arch of the Christain heaven is too narrow to embrace the earth. Beyond that heaven, across the fields of infinite, we discern a vaster sky, illumined by the dawn of a new dogma ; and on the rising of its sun your own heaven will disappear. We are but the precursors of that dogma : few as yet, but earnestly believing ; fortified by the collective instincts of the peoples, and sufficiently numerous to convince you—had you sense to comprehend it—that when the tide of materialism shall recede, you will find yourselves confronted by a far other foe.

We worship not anarchy : we worship Authority ; but not the dead corpse of an authority, the mission of which was concluded in a now distant past, and which can therefore only perpetuate its power through tyranny and falsehood.

The authority we revere is founded upon the free and deliberate acceptance and popular worship of the truth conquered by our epoch ; upon that

conception of life which God reveals to mankind in time and measure through souls devoted to Him and to His Law.

Your dogma may be summed up in the two terms, FALL and REDEMPTION; our own in the terms GOD and PROGRESS. The intermediate term between the Fall and Redemption is for you, the Incarnation, at a given moment, of the Son of God.

The intermediate term for us, between God and His Law, is the continuous and progressive incarnation of that law in Humanity, destined slowly and gradually to discover and to fulfil it throughout the immeasurable, indefinite future.

The word PROGRESS, therefore, represents to us, not a mere scientific or historic fact, limited, it may be, to one epoch, one fraction, or one series of the acts of humanity, having neither root in the past, nor pledge of duration in the future. It represents a religious conception of life radically different from yours; a divine Law, a supreme formula of the eternal, omnipotent, creative force, universal as itself.

The root of every religion is a definition of life and its mission. For you that definition of life is the doctrine of Original Sin, and of resurrection to God through *faith* in a Divine Being, who descended upon earth to sacrifice Himself in expiation of that sin.

Our definition of life asserts the *imperfection* of the finite creature; and its gradual self-correction by virtue of a capacity of progression, given to all men, through *works*; through the sacrifice of the egotistic instincts for the sake of the common improvement, and through faith in a divine Ideal, which each is bound to incarnate in himself.

God, the Father and Educator; the law prefixed by Him to life, the capacity, inborn in all men, to fulfil it; free will, the condition of merit; Progress upon the ascent leading to God, the result of right choice—these are the cardinal points of our faith.

In the dogma of Original Sin, which is the keystone of your edifice (except the *presentiment* it contains of that human solidarity which you do not comprehend), we see nought but Evil profanely made the baptism of life: the absolute impossibility of accounting for the inequality of evil tendency manifested among men, and an hereditary *doom* which denies alike human free will and responsibility.

In the Redemption through the incarnation of the Son of God (except the symbol it contains, by you neglected, of that aspiration which impels the finite towards union with the infinite) we only see subtraction made of the divinely educating force; the substitution of an arbitrary fact for the majesty of a divine law; a solution of the continuity of the

collective life of humanity, and the sanction of an unjust dualism between the generations anterior and posterior to the Cross.

From this diversity in the foundations of faith, follows a series of consequences which affect both heaven and earth—the Dogma and the Moral Code.

You believe in the divinity of Jesus. I can well understand the origin of this belief in times when it alone was able to secure the doubtful victory of Christianity; when the idea of Progress was unknown, and consequently unknown the conception of the gradual manifestation of God through His Law. You could not avoid attributing to the Announcer of truth a character which would compel mankind to obey His precepts.

We, who at the present day believe in the continuous revelation of God throughout the collective life of humanity, have no need of a sole immediate *Revealer* to teach us either to adore His power, or to feel His love.

The divine incarnation of both these attributes is perennial in the great facts which bear witness to the collectivity of life; in the great intellects, sanctified by virtue, who prophesy or interpret that universal life; and in the grand aspirations of the individual conscience, which foretell or accept truth.

We venerate in Jesus the Founder of the epoch

that emancipated individual man; the Apostle of the unity of the divine law, more largely understood than in times anterior to His own; the Prophet of the equality of souls: we reverence in Him the Man who loved more than any other; whose life—an unexampled instance of harmony between thought and action—promulgated as the eternal basis of every future religion, the sacred dogma of Sacrifice; but we do not cancel the Womanborn in the God; we do not elevate Him to a height whereunto we may not hope to follow Him: we love Him as the best of our human brothers; we do not worship and fear Him as inexorable Judge, or intolerant Ruler of the future.

You believe—thus depriving yourselves of every basis of intellectual certainty and criterion of truth—in *miracles*; in the supernatural; in the possible violation of the laws regulating the universe.

We believe in the Unknown; in the Mysterious—to be one day solved—which now encompasses us on every side; in the secrets of an *intuition* inaccessible to analysis; in the truth of our strange presentiment of an Ideal, which is the primitive fatherland of the soul; in an unforeseen power of action granted to man in certain rare moments of faith, love, and supreme concentration of all the faculties towards a determinate and virtuous aim—deserved therefore—and analogous to the power

of revelation which the increased concentration of rays in the telescope communicated to the human eye: but we believe all these things, the pre-ordained consequence of laws hitherto withheld from our knowledge.

We do not believe in the miraculous, as you understand it; in the infringement of laws already known and accepted by arbitrary will; in facts in contradiction to the general design of the creation, which would, we consider, simply testify to a want of wisdom or of justice in God.

You appeal in support of your theory to an idea of divine Free Will. We deny it. We are free, because, imperfect: called to ascend, to *deserve*, and, therefore, to choose between good and evil; between sacrifice and egotism. Such free will as ours is unknown to God, the perfect Being, whose every act is necessarily identical with the True and Just; who cannot, without violation of our every conception of His nature, be supposed to break His own law.

You believe in a God who has created and reposes. We believe in continuity of creation; in a God the inexhaustible source of the Life diffused perennially throughout the infinite; of thought, which in Him is inevitably identical with action; of conceptions. realised in worlds.

You believe in a heaven extrinsic to the universe;

in a determinate portion of creation, on accending to which we shall forget the past, forget the ideas and affections which caused our hearts to beat on earth. We believe in *One Heaven*, in which we live, and move, and love; which embraces—as an ocean embraces the islands that stud its surface—the whole indefinite series of existences through which we pass. We believe in the *continuity* of life; in a connecting link uniting all the various periods through which it is transformed and developed; in the eternity of all noble affections, maintained in constancy until the last day of our existence; in the influence of each of these life-periods upon the others; in the progressive sanctification of every germ of good gathered by the pilgrim soul in its journey upon earth and other-where.

You believe in a divine hierarchy of natures essentially distinct from our own and immutable. From the solemn presentiment enfolded in the symbol of the angel you have deduced no better conception than that of a celestial aristocracy—the basis of the conception of aristocracy on earth—and inaccessible to man. We recognise in the *angel* the soul of the just man who has lived in faith and died in hope; and in the inspiring, or guardian angel, the soul of the creature most sacredly and constantly loving and beloved by us on earth, having earned the recompense of

watching over and aiding us on earth. The ladder 'twixt earth and heaven of Jacob's dream symbolises, for us, the ascending and descending series of *men's* transformations on the path of initiation in the divine Ideal, and the beneficent influence exercised over us by the beloved beings who have preceded us upon that path.

You believe in an Eden surrounding the cradle of mankind, and lost through the fault of our first parents; we believe in an Eden towards which God wills that humanity—traversing the path of error and sacrifice—shall constantly advance. You believe that the soul can pass at one bound from its human existence to the highest beatitude, or to absolute, irrevocable perdition. We believe the human period of our existence too distant from the highest ideal; too full of imperfections to allow that the virtue of which we are capable here below can suddenly deserve to reach the summit of the ascent leading to God. We believe in an indefinite series of reincarnations of the soul, from life to life, from world to world; each of which represents an advance from the anterior; and we reject the possibility of irrevocable perdition as a blasphemy against God, who cannot commit self-destruction in the person of the creature issued from himself; as a negation of the law prefixed to life, and as a violation of the idea of love which is identical with God.

It may be that we shall retraverse the stage over which we have already passed, if we have not deserved to ascend beyond it, but we cannot, spiritually, either retrogress or perish.

You believe in the resurrection of the body, such as it was at the termination of our earthly existence; we believe in the *transformation* of the body (which is naught other than an instrument adapted to the work to be achieved) in conformity with the progress of the *Ego*, and with the mission destined to succeed the present.

All things are, in your creed, definite, limited, immediate, bearing the stamp of a certain immobility, which recalls the characteristics of the materialist conception of life. In our creed all is life, movement, succession, and continuity.

Our world opens upon the infinite on every side. Your dogma *humanises* God: our dogma teaches the slow, progressive *divinisation* of man.

You believe in grace; we believe in justice. You, by believing in grace, believe—more or less explicitly, but inevitably—in predestination, which is but a transformation of the pagan and aristocratic dogma of the two natures of man. Grace, according to you, is neither granted to all, nor to be achieved through works; it is arbitrarily bestowed by the Divine Will, and the *elect* are few. We believe that God called us, by creating us;

and the call of God can neither be impotent nor false. *Grace*, as we understand it, is the tendency and faculty given to us all gradually to incarnate the Ideal; it is the law of progress which is His ineffaceable baptism upon our souls.

That law must be fulfilled. Time and space are granted to us wherein to exercise our free will. We can—through our action and endeavour—hasten or delay the fulfilment of the law in time and space; multiply or diminish the trials, struggles, and sufferings of the individual; but not, as the dualism taught by your dogma would do, *eternise* evil, and render it victorious. Good only is eternal: God only is victorious.

Meanwhile, that dualism which dominates your doctrine of *grace*, of *predestination*, of *hell*, of *redemption* half-way upon the historic development of humanity, and every portion of your Dogma inspires and limits your Moral Code and renders it irremediably imperfect and inefficacious to guide and direct human life at the present day.

V

HUMANITY AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY

YOUR dogma is expiring. Your moral code is therefore rendered sterile and expires with it. It is deprived of its origin and its sanction ; of that faith in the duty and necessity of regulating human life by its precepts, whence it derived its power to govern men's individual instincts, passion, and free will. You have but to look around you in order to perceive this.

The moral code is eternal you say, and you point to the precepts of love towards God and man, of sacrifice, of duty, of preference given to the salvation of the soul over the desires and interests of a day.

Yes ; those precepts spoken by the lips of Jesus do live, and will live ; they are as undying as our gratitude towards Him. His cross, as symbol of the sole enduring virtue—sacrifice of self for others—may still be planted, without any contradiction, upon the tomb of the believer in the new religion ;

but a moral code which is to have a fruitful, active influence upon mankind requires far more than this.

The precept of love, which is inborn within the human soul, is the basis, more or less apparent, of all religions; but each religion gives a different value and larger interpretation to that general formula of Duty. The moral problem, the solution of which progresses with the epoch, is the problem, how we are to worship God, how we are to love man, how we are to work out the soul's salvation; and it is the mission of the religion of each epoch to give the force of a law, supreme over all and equally binding upon all, to the definition of the How, and to compel the fulfilment of the duty thus defined by linking it with heaven, tracing it back to the Divine conception of the creation. Even if your moral code were sufficient for the intelligence and aspirations of the epoch it would still remain sterile; a mere inert, inefficacious dead letter, because this link is lost. Your heaven exists no longer, your conception of creation is proved false. The telescope has destroyed it for ever in the fields of the infinite; geology has destroyed it on earth; the recently recovered tradition of the past of humanity has destroyed it in the kingdom of intelligence, and the presentiment within us of a new law of life has destroyed it in our hearts. But your moral code, holy as it was before

it had become adulterated by your corruption, intolerance, and cowardly compromise with the atheistic powers of the world, is unequal to the obligations imposed upon us by God.

The dualism of your dogma, transferred into your moral code, generated that antagonism between earth and heaven, matter and spirit, body and soul, which, no matter to what grade of the doctrine you belong, essentially narrowed your conception of the unity of life, and of its mission here and elsewhere, rendering it impossible that the great social questions of the day should be solved through help of your religion.

In the face of an empire believed to be omnipotent, and founded upon the prestige of material force placed between a religion which sanctioned the dogma of the two human natures (freeman and slave) and a philosophy which consigned mankind to the dominion of fatality, in a world of which there existed no conception of the collective life of humanity, or of an innate faculty of progress in individual man—having to address himself to men either intoxicated with tyranny and lust, or crushed by poverty and the abject servility induced by despair of a better future—it was impossible for Jesus to conceive any other mission for the benefit of the brother-men He loved so well, than that of effecting their moral regeneration, or any

other consolation for their wretchedness on earth than that of creating for them a country of free men and equals in heaven. It was His purpose to teach men how to save, to redeem themselves, in spite of, and against, the earth.

From the legend of the temptation, in which the earth is evidently the heritage of the evil spirit, down to the "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's" of the three first Gospels; from the opposition between the law of God and the flesh of Paul (Rom. vii.), down to the "love not the world," of John (2 Ep. ii. 15), the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles constantly insist upon our divorce from all terrestrial things, as a condition of moral improvement, of salvation. In their eyes our earthly abode is overshadowed by the curse of sin and temptation; and our sole hope of salvation from this curse lies in our suicide of the man within us. As Tell, even in the midst of the tempest, spurned from him the bark that bore the oppressor, each of us is held bound to spurn from him the earth, to cast loose every tie that binds him to it, in order to raise himself on the wings of faith to heaven.

The result of these teachings is a moral code which may be thus summed up:—Adoration of God, and faith in Christ, as the necessary intermediate to our salvation; renunciation of every

natural desire ; abdication of every aim of social transformation ; indifference to every earthly good ; resigned acceptance of every existing evil, either as a means of expiation, or of imitation of the sufferings of Jesus ; war to the body and to the senses ; submission to the powers that be ; exclusive importance given to the work of internal purification, especially to the realisation within ourselves of faith in heavenly grace.

The holy nature of Jesus's own mind diffused a breath of love over the whole of his teachings, and generated a spirit of charity and disposition to good works in his hearers ; but it was the love of men who, despairing of vanquishing the evil existing in the world, sought only to alleviate the more immediate sufferings of individuals. Christian charity was rather a means of purifying one's own soul, than the sense of a common aim which it was God's will that man should realise here below. It did not overpass the limits of benevolence, and led the believers in the new religion to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and heal the sick with whom they came in contact ; but to no attempt to destroy the causes of human hunger and misery. Even as the earth itself was despised, so were all the good things of the earth to be despised as a perennial source of temptation, and the gifts to the poor and to the Church testified to this

belief. Poverty itself was preached by the majority of Jesus's followers as a blessed mortification of the flesh, and regarded by all as an incontestable necessity. Love of country, and that love which embraces the generations of the future, and is devoted even unto sacrifice for their sake ; that love which will not tolerate the brand of inequality or slavery on the brow of a brother-man, was unknown to Christian morality. The true country, the real home of Christian free men and equals, was heaven ; every man was bound to direct his course thither ; and the greater his sufferings on earth, the stronger the hope he might entertain of his soul's future, and of celestial joy. The world was abandoned to Satan. Religion taught man to renounce it ; religion, which was alike his isolation and his refuge ; it imposed no mission of earnest and resolute struggle, and of slowly progressive but certain victory.

Such was, such is, your Moral Code. Solitary contemplation and monastic life were its first logical consequences. At a later period, when you were triumphant, when the necessity, which all religions undergo, of transforming society in their own image, compelled you to mingle in social and political life, you frequently (with immense advantage to civilisation) obeyed that uncertain and instinctive sense of right and equality which lies at the root of

your religion ; but it was simply as a fact, not as a doctrine, and did not in any way alter the educational principle of your Moral Code ; which was incarnated historically in the dualism of the temporal and the spiritual powers—the Papacy and the Empire. The greatest of your Popes, Gregory VII, attempted to crush this dualism beneath the omnipotence of moral force ; but he failed, and died in exile. The greatest of your philosophers, Thomas Aquinas, attempted to destroy the antagonism between the soul and the body, through a definition of man borrowed from Aristotle ; but it was too late ; not even the decrees of your Council of Vienna, in support of his attempt, could transform a moral code which had been identified with the Christian Conception of Life for thirteen centuries.

Your religion was the religion of individual man. It did not—it could not, at its origin,—contemplate collective humanity. It aspired towards the ideal, the divine, and would, had it been possible, have sought to realise its ideal on earth. But the instrument failed it. The short, imperfect life of the individual (beyond which this conception did not extend) is incapable of its realisation. Your religion, as if to avenge its own impotence, cried anathema upon the terrestrial world, and referred the solution of the problem to the world of grace—to heaven.

Herein lies the secret of all you have achieved, and of all you have failed to achieve.

Christianity is the religion of individual man. The vast religious synthesis through which we are gradually advancing towards the realisation of the ideal, is resolved like an equation containing an indefinite number of unknown quantities. Every religious epoch disengages one such unknown quantity, and classes one more term of the problem among the known quantities, never more to be disputed. Two grand primary epochs—the gigantic Aryan religions of the East—concentrated their intelligence, inspiration, and labour upon the two terms—God and Nature. But in both these epochs, the ideal man (crushed by spiritualist or materialist pantheism) was absent. While Mosaism elaborated the idea of the divine unity, and preserved the sacred deposit for futurity by incarnating it in a people, a third great epoch assumed (in Europe) the office of disengaging the human unknown—beginning with the individual—and adding it to the number of known quantities. As the human individual manifests life under two aspects, personal and relative—represented by the two terms, liberty and equality—so that epoch was divided into two long periods.

In the first period, polytheism affirmed the individual, and elaborated his emancipation within cer-

tain narrow limits, evolving—in the Greco-Roman world—the idea of liberty. During the first labour of elaboration, however, and in the intoxication of rebellion against Oriental pantheism, the conception of the Divine unity was broken up into fragments, and all basis of durability was thus destroyed.

In the second period, your religion, having inherited from Moses its belief in the Divine unity, replaced the Deity at the apex of the pyramid, and fulfilled its mission with regard to the problem of the individual, by defining his relative life, proclaiming the equality of souls, and declaring all men the children of one Father.

Such was the historic mission of Christianity ; nor was it possible that the epoch, when—as it invariably happens—it deduced its political and economic constitution from its religion, should advance beyond the limits of the doctrine of the individual, and the two terms (liberty and equality) by which that doctrine is represented. When the Protestant sects—moved by the corruption of Catholicism—sought to recall the multitudes to initial Christianity, they were unable to discover any other criterion of truth than individual conscience. The great political and social revolutions which, towards the close of the last century, attempted (knowingly or unknowingly) to realise the Christian

principles in practical life, summed up their whole labour and endeavour in a declaration of the rights common to every individual, and prefixed as sole governing law of the development of the double life—moral and material—of mankind, the insufficient rule of liberty.

God; God and Nature; God, Nature, and Man—three cantos of the gigantic religious Epopea which has the ideal for its subject and the generations for its poet. Wherefore do you pretend that God and the generations shall now be dumb? Wherefore should we bury in your sepulchre an inspiration inseparable from life itself, and silence the new canto rising to the lips of creation, which has for its theme—God, Nature, Man, and Humanity? Wherefore should not the new heaven, of which we already have dim prevision, be represented by a new earth? the new dogma, by a new Moral Code?

VI

OUR MISSION ON EARTH

THE earth is of God; it cannot be accursed. Life, like the God from whom it springs, is One and ever-lasting ; it cannot be broken up into fragments, or divided into periods of a character radically opposed. There is no antagonism between matter and spirit. Matter gives forms to thought ; symbols to the idea ; means of communication between being and being. The body, given by God as the earthly tenement of the individual, and the means of communication between His life and that of the external world, is not the seat of evil or temptation. Evil and temptation, wherever they do exist, exist in the Ego : the body is the instrument which translates either good or evil into action, according to our free choice. The dualism between the temporal and spiritual power is an immoral conception, without any basis in the nature of things. The moral law—once recognised and accepted—ought to be supreme ; and the mission of the temporal power is its application to

the civil and economic realities of life. Wherever such is not the case, either the moral law is—as yours is at the present day—the corpse or lying phantom of law, or he whose duty it is to translate it into action is false to it and is immoral.

The earth is of God. It is a step upon the infinite ascent that leads us to heaven: our sojourn during one of our existences, wherein we are bound to prepare ourselves for the next. It is neither a dwelling of expiation nor an arena of temptation. The necessity of purification from sins committed, and the temptations to evil which are conditions of our free will, exist in ourselves; and will accompany us in every ulterior evolution of the life of the Ego. The earth is the sphere wherein we have an appointed mission to perform, with instruments of labour furnished by it; and we are bound to regard it with love and reverence, as the seat of our possible sanctification. In the ascending series of worlds, separate stages of the long pilgrimages of the Ego, the earth also has its appointed place; it also is—within prescribed limits—the cradle of the ideal; an incarnation—in time and space—of the eternal world; a note in the immense concord which harmonises and embraces creation; an essential link of the chain which unites the universe with the throne of God.

Life is a mission: human existence that portion

of it which we have to accomplish here on earth. To discover, comprehend, and intellectually to master that fragment of the divine law which is accessible to human faculties, to translate it in action (as far as human powers allow) here, where God has placed us, is our aim, our duty. We are each and all of us bound to strive to incarnate in humanity that portion of eternal truth which it is granted to us to perceive; to convert into an earthly reality so much of the "kingdom of heaven"—the divine conception permeating life—as it is given to us to comprehend. Thus doing, we are slowly elaborating in man the angel; failing to do this we shall have to retrace our path.

The moral code deduced from our dogma preaches therefore to man :

"Seek not to isolate yourselves: imprison not your soul in sterile contemplation, in solitary prayer, in pride of individual purification, in pretending to a grace which no faith not realised in works can enable you to deserve. Be not deceived by the doctrine that salvation may be achieved in spite of, and in opposition to, the earth. You can only achieve it through the earth. You can only save yourselves by saving others. God asks not, What have you done for your soul? but, What have you done for the brother souls I gave you? Think of these: leave your own to God and His law. Labour

unweariedly for others' good : such action is the holiest prayer. In God, thought and action are one. Seek to imitate Him from afar. Aim not at contemplating God in Himself : you cannot do it. Contemplate Him in His works. Say not in dismay, the works of God are great, and I am nothing. God, by breathing into you a breath of His life, has decreed that you also are of worth. His works are your teachers ; were it not so, would He have spread them around you ? Seek in them His design, a syllable of the conception which is the soul of creation. Study that conception without foolish pride or hypocritical modesty, in the history of collective humanity, throughout which He gradually reveals to us the law of progress prefixed by Him to life. Study Him—purifying your heart as a sanctuary from every base passion, guilty desire, or idolatrous superstition—in the secret aspirations of your own soul ; in those instincts of truth which spring up within you in supreme moments of devotion or affection : then when you have mastered that syllable of the law, caught that ray of the divine conception, rise, calm in conviction, and strong in will, priests and apostles of that which you know to be the aim of life. Let every word speak faith in it, every act represent it. All that is in harmony with it is good ; all that tends to divert from it, evil. Help the first earnestly, combat the last openly.

“ Avoid alike the vanity which makes display of duty, and the resignation that shrinks from its fulfilment and submits to evil. Evil is here to be fought against: that we, who have free choice, may deserve. When victory is impossible, count martyrdom a benediction of God, The angels of martyrdom and of victory are brothers; both extend their protecting wings over the cradle of your future life.

“ Hold in honour your body, your faculties, and the material forces that surround you in nature. Instruments given to you by God for the discovery and fulfilment of your appointed aim, they are good or evil according as they are used for others’ benefit, or for your own; for egotism is the root of all evil, as sacrifice is the root of all virtue, and he who cries anathema on them, cries anathema on God.

“ Say not that wealth and material power are of Satan. Wealth is blessed when employed to relieve sorrow and suffering; accursed, when employed to minister to selfish passion, pleasure, or pride: blessed, when it emancipates a people, accursed, when it builds up the dominion of a single man, and denies God’s law of progress. All that exists is given for use and aid, and you sin equally by neglect or misuse.

“ You are bound to endeavour to transform the

earthly dwelling assigned to you for a time into a visible temple of the law: a gem of the crown the worlds are fashioning for the Eternal; and each of you may do this according to his sphere, if he look beyond the limited horizon of self. Look from the family to the commune; from the commune to the nation; from the nation to humanity; from humanity to the universe; from the universe to God. Let every act be such as, if accepted as the rule by the whole generation, would increase the actual sum of good, or decrease the actual sum of evil; and be you an unlettered peasant or a ruler of men, your merit will be equal, and your tomb the cradle of a new life, higher upon the scale of progress than your own.

“Love God in your fellow-men—men in the progress to be achieved for them and with them. Hold as offensive to God all that offends the dignity of the human being bound to worship Him; all that hinders the intellectual development of the being bound to comprehend Him gradually through his design; all that violates the liberty of the being bound to attune his life to that design; all that contaminates by corruption, materialism, superstition, or falsehood the being destined progressively to incarnate the ideal in itself. Combat such evils by example, word, and deed, and call upon your brother men to combat with you. Evil is not

eternal ; but the battle against it must be a crusade, for the conquest of the ideal demands the effort of entire humanity, the sum of all the faculties vouchsafed to it by God. Develop these faculties by association as intimately and widely as possible. Association, the sole method of progress, is—substituted for charity—the religious word of the epoch. Let help, given to individual suffering and consolation to him that weeps, constitute for you the joys of life. Let the sorrows of those who suffer afar off be equally sacred ; be your life's duty a watch in the night. Your battle is not with the effects, but with the causes of evil : wheresoever those causes are sustained by law or opinion, wheresoever you behold upon God's creature the stamp of inequality or slavery, there is the sign of Satan ; and be that sign on the brow of the negro, the working man, or the woman, you are bound to raise, with deeper meaning than of yore, the old Hussite cry, ' The Cup for all ! ' and either conquer, or die that others may.

“The earth's hymn to God can only be worthily sounded by the lips of freemen united in a common aim. Wrest from Satan the kingdoms of the earth with which he tempted Jesus ; then may you stand erect in conscious duty done and raise that hymn. Let the banner of the new faith, God, Progress, Humanity, head the crusade. God, the origin and

end of all : progress, the law He gave to life ; humanity, the interpreter, in God's own time and throughout all time, of that law. Deduce your rule of action from that faith, combat for the earth on the earth, but with eyes raised to heaven. Be your love the love that gives and receives support upon the ascending path of life. Hate the sin, but never the sinner : he bears within him (though stifled now by egotism) germs of the same virtues that are in yourselves, and destined yet to be developed. Love in him your brother of the future. Punish not : protect the society in which you live, and educate the erring members of it. Preach not, labour not, in the name of rights which do but represent the individual ; but in the name of duty, which represents the aim of all. You have no rights, save as the consequence of duties fulfilled ; they may all be summed up in the one right, that others should fulfil towards you the duty you fulfil towards them. Say not the sovereignty is in us. The sovereignty is in God. The will of the people is sacred only when it interprets and applies the moral law. It is impotent or null when it departs from it, and represents naught other than tyranny.

“Transform not yourselves from believers into idolaters by accepting any privileged interpreters between yourselves and God. The sun of God shines on all, the Word of God must illumine all.

Earth's mists arise between you and the sun, and clouds of error, superstition, and egotism intervene between the human soul and God ; but you can chase those clouds from the soul by educating it to religion, sacrifice, and love, and between you and God extend the links of the long and sacred chain of martyrs of thought and love, who still remember and love the earth whereon they accomplished a mission.

“Be your priests and counsellors in all the doubts and agitations of conscience those whom long years of tried virtue, and study of things eternal, have proved worthy to be such. Prophets and guides upon the weary pilgrimage of humanity are the men upon whose brow God has set the seal of genius sanctified by virtue ; but forget not that the Divine element exists also in yourselves ; never yield up the liberty of your immortal souls into the hands of your brother-man. Love, honour, and follow, but serve not. Respect in yourselves that human unity which is a reflex of the unity Divine. The false philosophy of the day has, in the absence of a religious faith, broken up that unity, by parcelling it out into faculties of reason, sentiment, and sensation, and some have worshipped one and some another of these faculties ; but remember that neither thought, aspiration, nor economic fact constitutes life : they are but the instruments of life,

equally necessary and equally sacred when united in action towards the realisation of its aim, the progressive incarnation of the ideal; and respect alike the inviolability of thought, the sanctity of aspiration, and the organised development of the material faculties, without which the development of the rest is impossible.

“Let labour be the basis of civil society, and let the distribution of its fruits be according to works. Let him who will not labour possess naught.

“Hold sacred the religious faith which unites the millions in a common part of love and action, but hold sacred also the heresy wherein it may be, lies the germ of the faith of the future. Represent the first in your rites and fraternal associations, but fail not to protect the second from all intolerance.

“You owe to all men education founded upon your religious synthesis, but forget not that the supreme conception of that religion is progress, and let the last words of that education be these: we have made known to you the moral law, in the name of which the brothers amongst whom you are called to live and labour are associated; but remember that life is given to you in order that you may endeavour to improve the society in which you live, to purify and enlarge its faith, and to urge forward on the path of eternal truth the men who surround you, and who will bless your work.”

You may cast your dying anathema on this moral code, but, humble individual as I am, I declare to you that the time is not far off, when it will take the place of that which you, while daily violating it in your actions, proclaim eternal.

VII

THE EVOLUTION OF FAITH

NO; the Book of God is not closed. And you who blaspheme against the Omnipotent by declaring yourselves the depositaries of its last page, give the lie to the sublimest previsions of Jesus, to the prophetic words recorded in the divinest of your four Gospels, words which alone would suffice to constitute the superiority of Christianity over all anterior religions.

“God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”—John iv. 24.

“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.”—John xiv. 16

“Even the Spirit of truth; . . . for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”—*Ibid* xiv. 17.

“I am the true vine and My Father is the husbandman.”—*Ibid* xv. 1.

“Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit,

He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

—*Ibid* xv. 2.

"It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."

—*Ibid* xvi. 7.

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

"Howbeit when He the spirit of truth is come, He will guide you unto all truth : for He shall not speak of Himself ; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak : and He will show you the things to come."—*Ibid* xvi. 12, 13.

All the greatest thinkers, from Prometheus to Socrates and Plato, and from them down to our own time, have prophesied the fall of one belief and the rising of another. None had prevision, like Jesus, of the characteristics of the future faith. One of those rare intuitions, which make of Him a type hitherto unique amongst men, inspired the words above quoted, linking His own faith to the faith to come. It seems as if the symbolic forms of religion, the transformatory work of time upon them, the sanctity of universal tradition, and the continuous revelation of the Spirit of God through humanity, were all foreseen by Him, on the eve of the sacrifice He had accepted ; when the darkness of the future was illumined by the immense love He bore to His fellow-men. You are no longer

capable of love or sacrifice, and, therefore, those words have no meaning for you ; unintelligible as the warning at the banquet of Belshazzar.

You will die, then—fate so wills it—but instead of dying in love, like Jesus, and invoking the coming of the comforter to mankind, you are doomed—as I formerly declared to you—to die the saddest of all deaths, with curses on your lips.

The Book of God is not closed. The coming generations are not disinherited ; they who preceded Jesus were not accursed. Children of God all of them, identical in faculties and tendencies, they transmit from each to each, in brightness growing with the growth of time and their own endeavour. the lamp of life kindled by Him, and fed and nourished by His Spirit. Revelation, which is, as Lessing says, the education of the human race, descends continuously from God to man ; prophesied genius, evoked by virtue and sacrifice, and accepted and proclaimed from epoch to epoch, by the great religious evolutions of collective humanity.

From epoch to epoch the pages of that eternal gospel (which Italians, neglected by us and persecuted by you, were the first to foretell) are turned ; each fresh page, disclosed by the ever-renovating Spirit of God, indicates a period of the progress marked out for us by the providential plan, and corresponds, historically to a religion. Each religion

sets before mankind a new educational idea as its aim ; each is a fragment, enveloped in symbols, of eternal truth. So soon as that idea, comprehended by the intelligence, and incarnated in the hearts of mankind, has become an inalienable part of universal tradition, even as the mountain traveller on reaching one summit beholds another rising above him, so is a new idea or aim presented to the human mind, and a new conception of life, a faith, arises to consecrate that idea, and unite the powers and activity of mankind in the fulfilment of that aim. Having accomplished its mission, that religion disappears ; leaving behind the portion of truth it contained, the unknown quantity disengaged by it from its symbol, a new immortal star in humanity's heaven. As the discoveries of science have revealed, and will reveal, star upon star, until our knowledge of the celestial system, of which the milky way is zone, and the earth a part, be complete, so the religious faculties of humanity have added, and will add faith to faith, until the entire truth we are capable of comprehending be complete. Columns of the temple which the generations are building to God, our religions succeed and are linked with one another, sacred and necessary each and all, but having each and all their determinate place and value, according to the portion of the temple they sustain. You who seek to support God's temple on a single

column seek the impossible. Could mankind follow you in the insane attempt, column and temple would fall together.

The world is athirst of God, of progress and of unity. You substitute for God an idol, an infallible Pope. You oppose to progress the impotent, barren negations of your canons. You impede unity by accepting—on condition that a fraction of the State be preserved to you by force—the dualism between the temporal and spiritual power, represented by the Papacy and monarchy. The hideous idolatry will be answered by God, the destroyer of all idols, past, present, and to come. Your wretched negations will be answered by humanity, which will look upon you, smile, and pass on. The dualism you perpetuate will be answered by the people—the sole power destined to increase—who are hourly acquiring that consciousness of their own strength which alone is needful for their victory.

The epoch of individuality is exhausted. The epoch of association has begun, and is destined—perhaps through the very Rome you desecrate and profane—to sweep away monarchy and the Papacy together.

I remember vaguely, while I write, a short poem of Byron's called "Darkness." Amid the ruins of a world expiring in icy cold, two beings alone are left. They also are doomed to perish, but they

persist in struggling against the approaching dissolution. Groping amid the darkness, they reach the ashes of an expiring fire, and strive, with all the anguish of one who seeks to prolong existence, if only for a day, to revive it with their breath. When at last they succeed in raising a feeble flame they turn to gaze upon each other, to discover, with rage and terror, that they are enemies!

I know not what idea inspired these lines to Byron; but my thoughts, as I recall them, turn involuntarily to you. The last, doomed representatives of a world, from which all life is withdrawn, you, Papacy, and Monarchy, have sought to dominate humanity more surely by dividing it in twain. Conscious of your incapacity of re-uniting it, and yet jealous in your impotent ambition of each other, you have striven to found an impossible alliance between the powers you have disjoined, and from time to time have embraced each other upon the tomb of some once free and dreaded nation; but hating and despising each other in your hearts, and seeking to injure each other so soon as freed from any imminent danger. Now groping onwards, solitary and suspicious, amid the darkness, and vainly seeking to rekindle the fire irrevocably consumed, you bend your dying gaze upon each other in rage and fear. Descend into the tomb you have dug for yourselves. Had you loved, forefelt the future, and

adored in time the Spirit of truth announced by Jesus in dying, you might have made of that tomb an altar. It is now too late. The Angel of Death will inscribe upon that tomb the condemnation you have forgotten :

“And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”—Matt. xii. 32.

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